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"A righteous wrath and just resentment, the swift punishment of the assassin and the wrongdoer, are wholly different from revenge, and are the safeguards and protection of a nation among nations."

S P E E C H

OF

HON. WILLIAM A. HARRIS,
OF KANSAS,

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Tuesday, April 5, 1898.

WASHINGTON.

1898.

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S P E E C H O F HON. WILLIAM A. HARRIS.

The Senate having under consideration the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Committee on Foreign Relations of this body be directed to report at the earliest practicable moment, and without waiting for the concurrence or advice of any department of the Government, what action, if any, in view of the loss of the battle ship *Maine* and the destruction of the lives of 266 American sailors, and in view of the well-known deplorable condition of affairs in the Island of Cuba, is required from the Congress of the United States to sustain and vindicate the honor and dignity of this nation, and to meet and answer the obligations of humanity imposed on this Government as the result of the condition of affairs in said island, and that said committee report by bill, resolution, or otherwise, as it may deem most expedient—

Mr. HARRIS said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have but a few words to say. It is not a time for many words. Those things which were a few months ago deemed the wild imaginings of sensational journalists have been brought home to this Chamber by some of its ablest members straight from the field of enactment—brought in such a fashion that the hideous reality has chilled our blood and made all previous stories seem flat and tame. The evidence has been so overwhelming of cold-blooded cruelty and murder so foul and vast that all denial has been hushed, and even the false and inhuman Government that is responsible is now talking of relief and restoration to the miserable remnant of humanity that is about to die; not hundreds, not thousands, but hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children, tortured, butchered, and starved to death at our very threshold, and still we have sniveling, canting hypocrites, who send advice to this Senate to hold back and let the foul work go on; still we have cold-blooded monsters who argue that it is none of our affair and that intervention will be trespassing upon the rights (God save the mark) of a friendly power.

Mr. President, when Cain, with bloody hands, insolently answered his God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" he formulated the doctrine of nonintervention; nor have his followers advanced or improved it. These horrors are not new or sudden spasms of ferocity; for four hundred years the flag of Spain has covered no other policy. From the time her steel-clad soldiers appeared among the naked nations of this New World they have been butchers and robbers. Half the world was theirs; but humanity could not endure the galling yoke, and heedless of death, seeking it gladly as a welcome release, her tortured subjects have risen and overthrown the oppressors.

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In the beautiful Island of Cuba for a generation there has been no peace. Revolt after revolt has occurred, stamped out with unspeakable cruelty at times, and at times, force failing, cajoled and lulled by false promises. Now, after years of struggle, lacking courage and skill to conquer, the Spaniard has planned and carried on the destruction by starvation of a whole race. If blood and tears and death are the price of liberty, the Cubans have earned it, and more dearly than any nation of earth.

But, Mr. President, it might seem possible to some men that this hell might be ignored, might be passed by on the other side, though in our very path, and we might, like Bismarck, declare that the lives of the whole Balkan race were not worth the bones of a single American sailor; but there came to us "la noche triste," of February 15, 1898, not saddened because of the loss of a few mailed robbers set upon by naked savages, and, tired out by butchery, falling victims to an outraged people, but because a gallant ship and a gallant crew went down to death by treachery—official treachery, at which the whole world revolts. Our "noche triste" came upon us, forever to be the night most sorrowful and black, most crammed with horror in all our years, in all the years which time shall give us. Sir, since that night, when the foul water of Havana closed over the *Maine* and her crew, the heart of the nation has been beating a funeral march, muffled and low, while waiting the verdict, and it seemed an age.

No race on earth ever exhibited such stern, sad self-control; but, oh, men in high places here, and beyond the seas, do not delude and shame yourselves with the thought that this, the blackest crime of all the ages, will be a mere "incident;" that this, the foulest insult that the world has blushed for, will be arbitrated; that this hideous specter will ever be laid by the diplomatic wiles of a nation that forever lets "the false face hide what the false heart doth know;" and to-day, Mr. President, all over this land there is the cry "Why do you wait?" and the flag snarls and flouts the wind, impatient.

Oh, God, it can not be that we forget! that we forget!

Sir, I have seen war. If to die were to reach the summit of human calamity, if to weep and mourn for the loved and lost were to make up the sum of human woe, then nothing would be worse than war. But, sir, there is a crucifixion of the soul when honor dies; there is a death of a nation "when the jingle of the guinea heals the hurt that honor feels;" there is an existence, when patriotic pride is dead, "that doth murder sleep" and life becomes a horrid nightmare, and men shun their fellows, and the laugh of little children becomes a taunt and a mockery. True, there have been men who could exist and thrive and fatten without national honor or pride or patriotism, like worms in a muck heap, but that nation has been the scorned of all time and has quickly died. God forbid that any such should ever be called Americans.

Sir, I shall never consent that our dead shall lie in Spanish soil and under the Spanish flag. Brave American sailors can know no rest there. When it becomes consecrated by freedom, when that flag has trailed in the dust, when the Cuban Republic is raised as a monument to the men who went down in the *Maine*, then, and then only, will they sleep.

Do you say this is revenge, and that revenge is unworthy of a great nation? No, Mr. President, a righteous wrath and just resentment, the swift punishment of the assassin and the wrongdoer,



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are wholly different from revenge, and are the safeguards and protection of a nation among nations, and enable us to look the whole world in the face. What sight more glorious than a nation roused in such a cause as this!

God hates a coward, and a nation timid, halting, and hesitating in its foreign policy is a sight despised of God and man. A just war promotes and preserves all that is highest and best in national life.

Christ bought the keys of Paradise
By cruel bleeding.

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